

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for wafer inspection, comprising:

~~receiving inspecting a sample at an inspection rate 'R', said sample having a first layer that is at least partly conductive and a second, dielectric layer formed over the first layer; following said second layer having production [[of]] contact openings formed therein in the second layer, said inspecting step comprising;~~

~~directing a high-current beam of charged particles, said beam having a beam current 'I_b' and a spot area 'A₁', to simultaneously irradiate a large number of contact openings at multiple locations distributed over an area of the sample, said area comprising a quantity 'n' of said contact openings, said openings being disposed within an area smaller than A₁;~~

~~measuring a specimen current flowing through the first layer in response to irradiation of the large number of contact openings at the multiple locations said beam; and~~

~~providing an indication of the at least one defective hole indication, in response to the measurement, of whether any hole in quantity 'n' is defective, wherein~~

I_b is approximately 10 μamps, R is at least 0.2 cm²/sec, area A₁ is approximately 25 μm², and an average noise current per contact opening is less than 9 nA.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the large number of holes exceeds quantity n is approximately one hundred.

3. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the steps of directing and measuring are repeated at a ~~very high repetition frequency greater than 2 MHz~~.
4. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the high current beam is characterized by a large cross section and the step of directing comprises compensating for aberrations.
5. (Original) The method according to claim 4 wherein the high current beam comprises electrons emitted over a large angular range in relation to an optical axis of the high current beam.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of compensating comprises propagating the high current beam through a long magnetic lens.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprises measuring a secondary electron current emitted from the sample responsive to the high current beam, and wherein the indication is further responsive to the measured secondary electron current.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of providing an indication is followed by a step of locating the at least one defective hole.
9. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the step of locating comprises directing a high resolution beam towards the at least one defective hole.
10. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the contact openings comprise holes.
11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the contact openings comprise trenches.
12. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein area of different directing sessions overlap.
13. (Original) The method of claim 1 herein repeating the steps of directing and providing to illuminate multiple areas of the wafer.
14. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of estimating a signal to noise ratio associated with the high current beam and altering at least one characteristics of the high current beam in response.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the at least one characteristic is selected from the group consisting of beam current and spot size.

16-30. (Canceled)

31. (Original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the steps of directing and measuring are repeated until at least a substantial sized portion of the wafer is irradiated by the high current beam.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the stage of providing an indication is responsive to previously measured currents.

34. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the stage of providing an indication is responsive to previously estimated currents.

35. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the stage of providing an indication comprises applying die to die comparison.

36. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the stage of providing an indication comprises applying die to golden die comparison.

37. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the stage of providing an indication comprises applying cell to cell comparison.

38-42 (Canceled)